

Campaign Medals

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Campaign Medals

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Campaign Medals

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

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Lincoln Lore

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LOUIS A. WARREN LINCOLN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM IS RECIPIENT OF BARONDESS/LINCOLN AWARD

The Civil War Round Table of New York has this month honored the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum with the Barondess/Lincoln Award. The award is given each year for "contribution to the greater appreciation of the life and works of Abraham Lincoln." Mark E. Neely, Jr., accepted the award at the meeting of the Civil War Round Table on February 14th at the 7th Regiment Armory in Manhattan.

The Round Table noted that 1978 marked fifty years of service as a "repository of Lincoln . . . artifacts and a . . . library on the subject" for the Lincoln Library and Museum. It noted also the institution's acting "as a clearing-house of information on Lincoln." *Lincoln Lore*, first issued in 1929, is now sent "monthly free of charge to six thousand schools and universities, historical societies, Lincoln scholars and collectors" and "is the accepted authority in the matter of bibliography of printed materials on Lincoln." The Round Table mentioned as well the R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture, which "brings to Fort Wayne an outstanding Lincoln scholar to speak on some new aspect of research in the field."

The Barondess/Lincoln Award was established in 1962 in memory of Dr. Benjamin Barondess of New York, a charter member of the Round Table and the author of several works on Lincoln. Barondess was a member of the New York Bar, a graduate of Columbia College and the New York University

Law School. Lincoln students know him as the author of *Three Lincoln Masterpieces: Cooper Institute Speech, Gettysburg Address, Second Inaugural* (Charleston, West Virginia: Education Foundation of West Virginia, Inc., 1954). The Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum contains three other pamphlets by Barondess: *The Gettysburg Address: Revealing Facts About One of the "Supreme Masterpieces" of the English Language* (Reprinted by permission from the *Autograph Collectors' Journal*, Spring Issue, 1952, Vol. IV, No. III), *Lincoln's Cooper Institute Speech* (New York: The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc., 1953), and *The Adventure of the Missing Briefs* (New York: The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc., 1955).

The first recipient of the Barondess/Lincoln Award was author Neil Harris. Last year Stephen B. Oates gained the award for *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln*. The Civil War Round Table honored Louis A. Warren with the Barondess/Lincoln Award in 1965, and now it honors the institution which bears his name. The staff of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum is most grateful to the New York group for noticing our "contribution to the greater appreciation of the life and works of Abraham Lincoln." Lincoln students everywhere appreciate the efforts of this Civil War Round Table to stimulate work in the Lincoln field.

"PIG IRON" AND THE GENESIS OF A LINCOLN CAMPAIGN MEDAL

Although museums and collectors have hotly pursued the medals and buttons associated with Abraham Lincoln's campaigns for the Presidency, they have generally had more success in acquiring the medals than in describing the specific circumstances of their production and use. Hardly any form of information is more difficult to come by than that which links these solid artifacts with the men who produced them and the politicians who encouraged their use. The historians who are most familiar with the letters and political literature of the period have shown little interest in the material political culture of Lincoln's day. Collectors and museum curators spend their daily lives amidst the remains of that political culture, but they tend to have little time to cultivate the broad familiarity with written sources necessary to explain the uses of the artifacts. This article is a very modest attempt to bridge that gap in the case of one Lincoln campaign medal.

In the Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, there is a letter written by William Darrah Kelley of Philadelphia to Norman Buel Judd which gives a brief glimpse of the circumstances which produced a campaign medal. Kelley, who ran successfully for Congress the year of Lincoln's first election to the Presidency, was a Democrat turned Republican and a free trader become protectionist. In Kelley's long career in Congress after this first successful run, he became so strongly identified with tariff protection for Pennsylvania's iron and steel industries that he was nicknamed "Pig Iron." Judd, another Democrat turned Republican, was a member of the Republican National Committee, Chairman of Illinois's State Central Committee, and, most important, a close political advisor of Abraham Lincoln in the



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 1. Campaign medal, AL 1860-12.

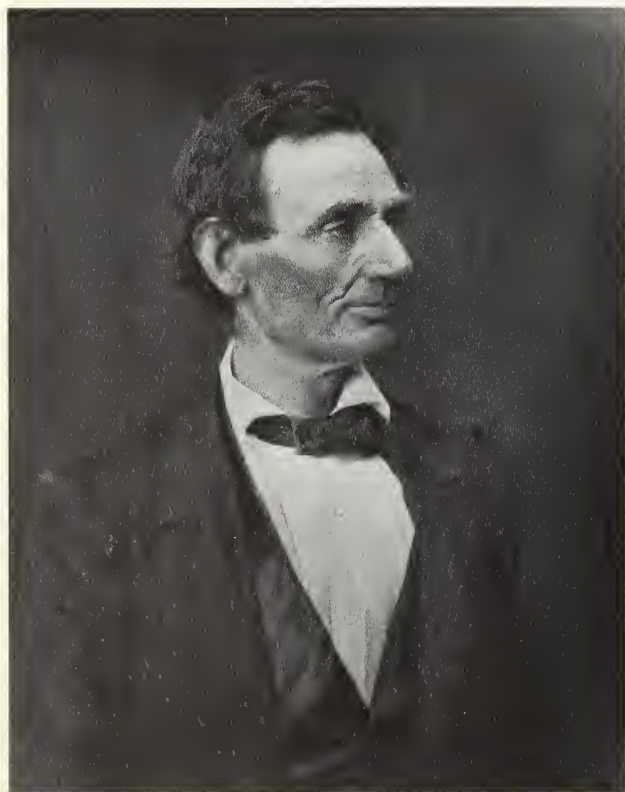
1860 campaign.

On June 1, 1860, Kelley wrote Judd from Philadelphia, telling him, "A townsman of mine, a clever artist in his line — is very anxious to get out a medal for campaign use with a faithful likeness of Mr. Lincoln. To do this requires a perfect profile and for this he has applied to me." Pictures of the surprise nominee of the Republican party were evidently scarce in the East. "Can you send me one — A reliable *profile* — or if you have none can you induce Mr. Lincoln as a favor to me, or for the good of the cause to have one photographed," Kelley asked. "I hereby transfer my commission to you not doubting that it will be faithfully executed at your earliest convenience." Kelley added, "I will cheerfully honor a draft for the cost & trouble as I believe it will result in a creditable work." Kelley's letter then concluded with a report on the exceedingly good political prospects for the Republican cause in Pennsylvania: "... the good old Keystone state is no longer in the category of doubtful things."

On June 6th the diligent Judd wrote "Friend Lincoln," enclosing Kelley's letter and reminding the Presidential nominee that Kelley "was with the party that visited you to notify you of your nomination." Judd explained that he sent Kelley's letter "not . . . so much on account of the picture proposition as that you may know his views of Penn., and that your over zealous friends may let well enough alone." However, Judd did comment on the "picture proposition": "The picture although troublesome to you, when requested by such a person as Judge Kelley ought to be attended to — Every little [bit] helps, and I am coming to believe, that likenesses broad cast, are excellent means of electioneering."

For his part, Lincoln not only read the political news from Pennsylvania but also attended, apparently, to the "picture proposition." The envelope from Judd bears these words in Lincoln's hand: "Judge Kelly [sic]. Profile." In another hand is written, "Answered."

Lincoln had received the nomination on May 18th, and there was no abundance of photographs of the candidate from which to choose three weeks later, when Kelley's letter arrived. However, the candidate had posed for a series of photographs in Springfield three days before Judd's letter was written. The four photographs taken by Alexander Hesler on June 3, 1860, included one which was nearly in profile. Per-



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 2. Hesler's near-profile photograph of Lincoln.



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 3. Campaign medal, AL 1860-33.

haps this is the one Lincoln sent Kelley for his medal-making constituent (see FIGURE 2). There are two campaign medals listed in J. Doyle DeWitt's *Century of Campaign Buttons, 1789-1889* (Hartford: privately published, 1959) which were struck in Philadelphia and seem to have been based on the Hesler photograph. One (No. AL 1860-12 in DeWitt's book) was engraved by William H. Key and, says DeWitt, "undoubtedly was based upon the photograph of Lincoln made by Hesler in Springfield on June 3, 1860." The reverse of this medal bears the inscription: "THE PEOPLES' CHOICE/ 1860/ LINCOLN & HAMLIN/ FREEDOM/ &/ PROTECTION." The other (No. AL 1860-33), engraved by Robert Lovett, Jr., of Philadelphia, misspells Lincoln's name as "ABRAM" on the obverse, and bears the inscriptions on the reverse: "FREEDOM & PROTECTION, LINCOLN & HAMLIN" and "THE/ MAN THAT/ CAN SPLIT RAILS/ OR GUIDE THE/ SHIP OF/ STATE."



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 4. This campaign medal, struck in Waterbury, Connecticut, may have been based on this profile photograph (inset).



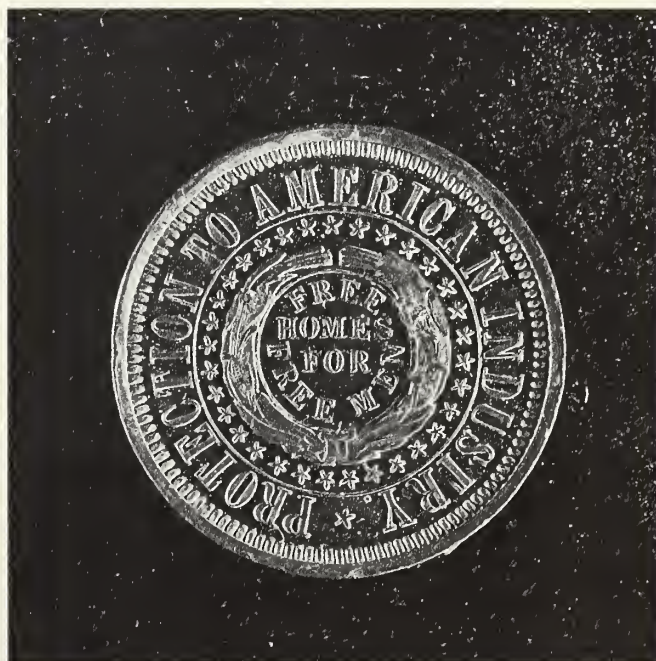
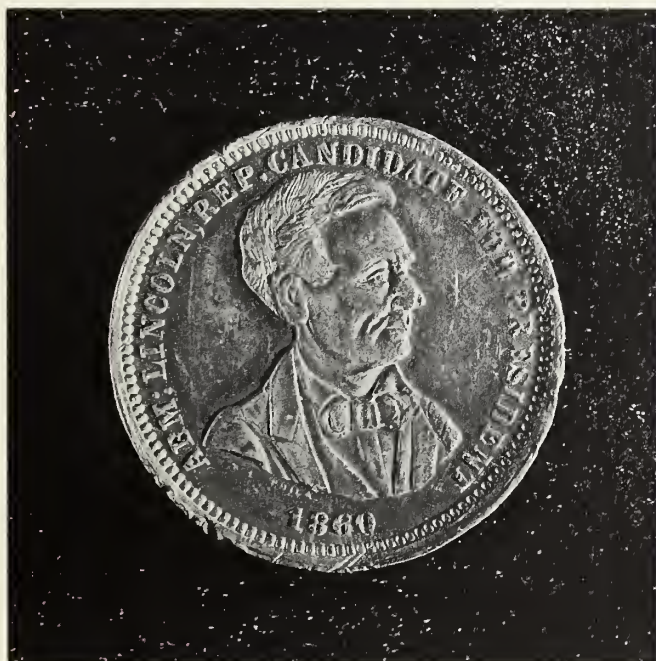
*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 5. Reverse of campaign medal, AL 1860-12.



*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 6. Reverse of campaign medal, AL 1860-33.



*Both photographs from the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURES 7-8. Another possible candidate for the medal struck by William D. Kelley's constituent is the one shown above (obverse and reverse). J. Doyle DeWitt identifies the medal as AL 1860-51. It was struck by Robert Lovett of Philadelphia. Like other Lincoln campaign items from tariff-mad Pennsylvania, this one urged "PROTECTION TO AMERICAN INDUSTRY." Here the tariff appeal was combined with the slogan "FREE/HOMES/FOR/FREE MEN." The latter slogan combined the idea of homestead legislation (free homes) with the heart of the Republican idea, free soil (free men). Winning Pennsylvania was a key to Republican success in 1860, and Lincoln's "sound" record on the tariff was essential. When Lincoln selected his cabinet after the victory, rewarding Pennsylvania was crucial. One of the arguments used by supporters of Simon Cameron's bid for a cabinet position was that it would reassure Pennsylvania's high-tariff men, especially if Cameron were made Secretary of the Treasury. Unfortunately for Cameron, he had a reputation for corruption and dishonesty, and the idea of associating Cameron with the Treasury was more than many Republicans could stomach. Some found the idea of any association of Cameron with "Honest Abe" repulsive, but in the end Cameron became Secretary of War.

One other Lincoln campaign medal (identified by DeWitt as AL 1860-47) called for "PROTECTION TO/HONEST/INDUSTRY." Its place of manufacture is unknown, but all other pro-tariff campaign medals identified by DeWitt came from Pennsylvania. Issues changed in 1864, and only one medal mentioned the tariff. It was, of course, made in Philadelphia.

Until more is known about Kelley's constituent, the precise identification of the medal will remain in doubt. However, some modest conclusions can be drawn at this point. Both of the medals described above reveal Pennsylvania's obsession with the tariff, a preoccupation which Abraham Lincoln understood very well. In January of 1861, when President-elect Lincoln decided to offer the position as Secretary of the Treasury to Ohio's Salmon P. Chase rather than Pennsylvania's Simon Cameron, he explained to a political confidante, "But then comes the danger that the protectionists of Pennsylvania will be dissatisfied." Only the medals from Pennsylvania (and one the source of which is unknown) stress "Protection." Others deal with Union or free soil. It seems fitting that "Pig Iron" Kelley should have been midwife to the birth of such campaign materials.

It is instructive, too, to note the primitive state of campaign financing. Kelley was willing to pay out of his own pocket for the production of a photograph to aid the Philadelphia medal-maker. In fact, the nature of campaigning itself was not yet a matter of predictable public-relations techniques. Norman Judd served in the Illinois Senate from 1844 to 1860 and was a political wire-puller of long standing. Lincoln knew Judd's abilities very well, and, when he was having difficulty with excluding Cameron from his cabinet, he had "a great notion to post Judd fully in this matter, and get him to visit Washington, and in his quiet way, try to adjust it satisfactorily." As Chairman of Illinois's Republican State Central Committee and a member of the Republican National Committee from 1856 to 1861, Judd was a politician's politician, a man who surely knew how to run a campaign. Yet even Judd instructed Lincoln to see to the "picture proposition" largely as a favor to Kelley and was just "coming to believe, that likenesses broad cast, are excellent means of electioneering."

Historians are a little like Judd in that they are just coming to realize the significance of a broad range of campaign materials. Medals do have some political content; in 1860, Pennsylvania's campaign medals mentioned protection — others did not. Still, it is the general lack of content in such materials that is revealing. Judd, Lincoln, and Kelley attended to the medal matter in the crush of other important political business. Though historians stress issues in their studies of politicians, the politicians often preferred not to. Issues are divisive. Medals and pictures are not. Politicians ran "hurrah" campaigns, not debates on political science, and the great abundance of "hurrah" campaign ephemera is the best proof of the politicians' preferences.



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 9. William Darrah Kelley.

LINCOLN AUTOGRAPHED DEBATES: A COPY PRESENTED BUT NOT SIGNED

Editor's Note: I am indebted to Grant Talbot Dean of the Chicago Historical Society for informing me of the existence of the book discussed in this article.

The Chicago Historical Society owns an interesting copy of the *Political Debates Between Hon. Abraham Lincoln and Hon. Stephen A. Douglas in the Celebrated Campaign of 1858, in Illinois* which bears this inscription: "James C. Conkling/Presented by A Lincoln/April 7 1860." Harry E. Pratt did not list this copy in "Lincoln Autographed Debates," *Manuscripts*, VI (Summer, 1954).

James Cook Conkling (1816-1899) was a likely recipient of a free copy of Lincoln's book. Born in New York City, Conkling graduated from Princeton and settled in Springfield in 1838. Politics, profession, and matrimony soon forged a Lincoln-Conkling friendship. Conkling was, like Lincoln, a lawyer and a Whig in politics. In 1841, he married Mercy Ann Levering, the "Dearest Merce" of Mary Todd (Lincoln's) earliest known letters. In fact, Conkling's letters provide one of the more important sources for the Todd-Lincoln courtship, the gay social life of early Springfield, and the early appearance of Abraham Lincoln.

Conkling was a politician of some local prominence, being elected mayor of Springfield in 1844 and to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1851. Like Lincoln, Conkling became a Republican. He campaigned for Lincoln in Pennsylvania in 1860. When Lincoln became President, Conkling occasionally visited Washington as agent to handle Federal accounts for the State of Illinois. In 1862, he used his friendship with the President as an avenue to press for the selection of Mackinaw City rather than Michilimackinaw as a spot to be fortified for the protection of the Great Lakes. Conkling cited a number of arguments about the relative military advantages of the two sites, but he also admitted that he had invested some \$18,000 in Mackinaw City over the previous five years.

Students of Lincoln's Presidency know Conkling principally for his invitation to Lincoln to speak at a mass rally in Illinois on September 3, 1863. Conkling hoped that Lincoln would make a personal appearance, but from the start Lincoln leaned towards sending a letter to be read at the rally. Conkling, whom Lincoln thought "one of the best public readers" he knew, read the famous letter at the rally. Lincoln had cautioned him: "Read it very slowly." The letter defended the administration's policies of emancipation and arming Negroes as the best ways militarily to save the Union. Conkling was an ardent antislavery man, and he complimented the letter and hoped for the day when military success would leave "no question as to the condition and rights of 'American citizens of African descent.'"

Conkling wanted to visit Europe, and, in the summer of 1864, he pressed Lincoln for a European appointment. The President gave Conkling an introduction to Secretary of State William H. Seward, but nothing came of it. Conkling nevertheless continued to work hard for Lincoln's reelection and spurned the third-party movements which lured some other antislavery liberals away from Lincoln's camp. When Lincoln won reelection, Conkling pressed again for a European appointment, but the result was the same as in the previous summer.

There is no doubt of Lincoln's close personal relationship with Conkling. He referred to him at various times during the Civil War as "entirely trustworthy," as "my personal friend of long standing," as "a good man," and as "a particular friend & fellow townsman." Yet the Conkling presentation copy of the *Debates* is not autographed by Lincoln. Harry Pratt missed the Conkling copy, but he did note two similar unsigned presentation copies. John H. Littlefield, once a student in the Lincoln-Herndon law office, wrote in his copy: "J.H. Littlefield From A. Lincoln, April 25, 1860." And Charles J. Sellon, an Illinois newspaper editor, wrote in his: "Chas. J. Sellon Presented by Hon A. Lincoln." The inscription in the Chicago Historical Society copy is in Conkling's hand. It is written in ink; Lincoln wrote in ink in only one of the nineteen known copies he signed. It is dated; Lincoln dated only one of the copies he signed. The early April date would be approximately the time Lincoln first received his one hundred copies of the book from the publisher, and Lincoln was in Springfield on April 7th. Like Littlefield and Sellon, James Conkling failed to have Lincoln sign his copy of this famous book.

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